

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for authenticating a spare vehicle key to be used with a vehicle in the absence of a regular key, the method comprising the acts of:

providing the spare vehicle key with an identification number;

transmitting said identification number to a central station;

checking the transmitted identification number by the central station; and

authenticating the spare vehicle key and sending an authorization signal from the central station to the vehicle.

2. The method according to Claim 1, wherein at least one data transmission by and between the spare vehicle key, central station and vehicle is encoded.

3. The method according to Claim 2, wherein said data transmission occurs in one direction followed by transmission of a confirmation signal in an opposite direction.

4. The method according to Claim 3, wherein bidirectional data traffic in one direction takes place based on a public key and decoding at the central station takes place based on a private key.

5. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the act of transmitting the identification number of the spare vehicle key to the central station is carried out by the vehicle, said identification number of the spare vehicle key having been previously transmitted to the vehicle.

6. The method according to Claim 2, wherein the act of transmitting the identification number of the spare vehicle key to the central station is carried out by the vehicle, said identification number of the spare vehicle key having been previously transmitted to the vehicle.

7. The method according to Claim 3, wherein the act of transmitting the identification number of the spare vehicle key to the central station is carried out by the vehicle, said identification number of the spare vehicle key having been previously transmitted to the vehicle.

8. The method according to Claim 4, wherein the act of transmitting the identification number of the spare vehicle key to the central station is carried out by the vehicle, said identification number of the spare vehicle key having been previously transmitted to the vehicle.

9. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the transmitting acts are performed using telephony.

10. The method according to Claim 2, wherein the transmitting acts are performed using telephony.

11. The method according to Claim 3, wherein the transmitting acts are performed using telephony.

12. The method according to Claim 4, wherein the transmitting acts are performed using telephony.

13. The method according to Claim 5, wherein the transmitting acts are performed using telephony.

14. The method according to Claim 1, wherein said transmissions are encoded with a random number.

15. The method according to Claim 2, wherein said transmissions are encoded with a random number.

16. The method according to Claim 1, wherein before an actual data transmission, a radio receiver in the vehicle is activated by the spare vehicle key.